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ABSTRACT

The digest addresses ways in which gifted and talented students are identified. Commonly used identification systems include matrix systems, the Talent Search Identification Model, and the Revolving Door Identification Model. Major questions about identification practices include inappropriate use of certain instruments and the inadequacy of existing measures to identify certain subpopulations. Guidelines for identification procedures and criteria include the use of identification criteria specifically related to the definition, reasonable cutoffs, allowance for an appeals procedure, and the use of reliable and valid performance indicators. The most frequently used sources of information include test scores, ancedotal records, student products and performances, peer and self ratings. A brief list of references concludes the digest. (CL)

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1985
DIGEST

IDENTIFICATION OF THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

What Are the Most Commonly Used Identification Systems?

Currently many gifted programs use a modified multiple criteria approach which usually involves a placement team. The team first decides on a definition, target population and programming model; then a screening procedure is selected and next, identification instruments (tests, checklists, etc.) are chosen for the final selection process. Tests and checklists must be chosen to fit the program being developed and should be both valid and reliable instruments. Some state guidelines require a minimum group or individual IQ score for students to be placed in an academic gifted program. State department personnel should be contacted *before* extensive work is completed on an identification process that may not comply with state guidelines.

Other commonly used identification systems include the use of a matrix system in which various sources of information are assembled and logged. The Baldwin Matrix (Baldwin & Wooster, 1977) is one example of a matrix system.

Recently, *The Revolving Door Identification Model* (Renzulli, et al., 1981) has gained acceptance as it seeks to create a larger pool of students in which gifted behavior may be developed. Approximately 15-29% of a target population can be identified as a Talent Pool, eligible for certain services on a regular basis. The Revolving Door Model introduces a new concept in identification called "action information" that is a second level in identification occurring when a youngster becomes extremely interested or excited about a particular topic, area of study, issue, idea, or event.

Another commonly used identification method is the Talent Search Identification Model that offers a standardized, national approach to identify students of junior high age who have scored at the 95th percentile or higher on an ingrade standardized achievement test. Students then take the SAT as a second level test. Developed by Julian Stanley and his colleagues at Johns Hopkins University, the Talent Search annually tests 80,000 students (Van Tassel-Baska, 1984).

What Are the Major Problems in Identification Practices in Gifted and Talented Education?

In a recent national survey of identification practices in the field of gifted and talented education (Alvino, McDonnel, Richert, 1981), two prevalent problems related to identification were discovered: the inappropriate use or blatant misuse of certain instruments and the inadequacy of existing measures to identify certain subpopulations, such as disadvantaged and culturally different children. Approximately 120 tests, instruments, and other techniques of identifying gifted students were cited by respondents. The researchers found that many of the tests/instruments were "... being used for purposes and populations completely antithetical to those for which they were intended and designed" (p. 129). For example, IQ achievement tests were being used to identify creativity, talent in the arts, and leadership ability.

The survey also raised questions about whether multiple criteria really is being used to identify gifted students as the results clearly indicated that "... most identification of gifted students continues to be of general intellectual ability as reflected by IQ" (p. 130). The results of the survey seem to indicate that many problems still exist in identification of the gifted.

How Are Students Usually Identified to Participate in Gifted Programs? How Should They Be Identified?

The first step in identification should always be to ask a simple question: Identification for what? For what type of program or experience is the youngster being identified? If, for example, an arts program is being developed for talented artists, the resulting identification system must be structured to locate youngsters with either demonstrated or potential talent in art. Therefore, IQ or achievement tests would *not* be appropriate for identifying this population.

With the expanded conception of giftedness emanating from the Marland Report (1972), the use of multiple criteria for identification became popular. Using multiple criteria generally means that at least three appropriate criteria will be used in the identification process. For example, a pool of eligible students may be identified by eliminating from consideration all students who score below the 95th percentile on national norms. The next step might be to gather information on this group including teacher ratings, creativity tests, grades, and evidence of task commitment. The final step might be the administration of an individually administered IQ test. Students scoring over 132 (as determined by some state guidelines) will then be included in the program. One might reasonably ask why the effort was made to gather other information if the final decision was based solely on the results of an IQ test. What is gathered should be used. Carter and Hamilton (1985) recently offered the following guidelines for identification procedures and criteria:

1. Identification criteria are specifically related to the definition.
2. Performance indicators are reliable, valid measures of the defined areas of giftedness.
3. Multiple criteria are used.
4. Cutoffs are reasonable in light of relevant research and the amount of error found in each performance indicator.
5. Separate scores have been converted to a common scale and weighted appropriately when composite scores have been computed.
6. The process allows for an appeals procedure.
7. Due process is followed.
8. The entire process reflects the stated program philosophy.

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The most frequently used sources of information in the identification process are:

- Test Scores
- Completed Products and Performances
- Anecdotal Records
- Observational Reports
- Teacher Ratings
- Peer Ratings
- Self-Ratings
- Parent Ratings
- Unstructured Self-Expressions
- Classroom Performance

A listing of commonly used instruments used to identify sources of information can be found in the National Survey of Identification Practices in Gifted and Talented Education (Alvino, et al., 1981) and an extensive collection of assessment devices are included in the appendices of *The Revolving Door Identification Model* (Renzulli, Reis, & Smith, 1981).

Summary

This ERIC Digest can serve only as an introduction to identification. Anyone who has accepted the responsibility for planning an identification system must learn about the various systems, strategies, and options that can be used. The problems in identification should be addressed as well as the amount of information that cannot be determined by tests. As the definition of giftedness is extended beyond those abilities that are clearly reflected in tests of intelligence, achievement and academic aptitude, it becomes necessary to place less emphasis on precise estimates of performance and potential, and more emphasis on the opinions of qualified human judges in making decisions about admission to special programs. The crux of the issue boils down to a simple and yet very important question. How much of a "trade off" are we willing to make on the objective/subjective continuum in order to allow recognition of a broader spectrum of human abilities? If some degree of subjectivity cannot be tolerated, then our definition of giftedness and the resulting programs will logically be limited to abilities that can only be measured by objective tests. It is interesting to note that for hundreds of years people in the arts have been identifying and developing the talents of young people and this process has been carried out almost exclusively without the aid of standardized tests. Most persons in the arts (and other areas of creative expression) would undoubtedly say that the wrong kind of information is collected when tests are used to identify talent potential.

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